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AARDVARK-VANAHEIM PRESENTS

CEREBUS

54
SEP

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A Note from the Publisher

The time since my last editorial has been filled with so many things, I doubt if I'll get around to everything!! When Dave and Karen and I got back from MapleCon, we had our work cut out for us. Cerebus #53 had to be finished and sent to the printers before Dave and I left for Comix Fair in Houston. We ended up with the three of us working until the wee hours the night before the flight, but it was done. It was kind of fun to do it that way, but I sure wouldn't want to make a habit of it!!

At Houston we had a real taste of southern hospitality. There were people at the Con I hadn't seen for a while, like Cat Yronwood and Dean Mullaney (hi Cat, hi Dean) and Dave spent some time the first night talking with Craig Russell.

The Convention started up the next day, and I spent a fair amount of time just talking to people. Dave and Chris Claremont had a "good-ole-time" at the Marvel party on Saturday night. The funny thing is, I'd swear Chris wasn't drinking alcohol but he looked and sounded like he'd had quite a few. The two of them were entertaining everyone there.

Paul Smith had come into Houston on his motorcycle (he was taking a "grand tour" from New York to San Diego, on it) and said he was going for a ride. Well, I haven't ridden on a bike since high school (we won't say how long ago that was). Naturally, I had to ask if I could come along. We rode around through the parks and into the city of Houston, (I'd forgotten it was a big city!) and I didn't want the ride to end. What fun!

The next day was Sunday, the last day of the con. Dave and I had been invited by Tuba (hey Tuba - hi!) who is a clown at the Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus to come and be his guest. Since they were in town the same time we were, would we like to come? Silly question, when I've never even seen a circus before. It was really thrilling. I now know what they mean by saying an event is "like a three-ring-circus". You **can't** watch everything, but I sure tried!! We even got to go backstage and see how it is all organized. During an intermission, one of the other clowns came up to me, and gave me a purple feather from the ring. Then, in a completely Harpo Marx gesture, he took off his hat and waited for his kiss, as a reward. How did he know I'd always had a soft spot for Harpo? I gave him a kiss, and was laughing so hard at his antics when he went to get another feather, that tears were running down my face. Thank you Scotty, it was really precious!!

That night, after the circus, Dave was staying in Houston to do a signing with Joe Rubinstein in town the next day. I was to get a ride with Cat and Dean to San Diego. They had left for Austin earlier in the day, to visit friends, and so I missed them when I went to the circus. I knew Paul Smith was going on to San Diego on his bike, so I asked him if he could give me a ride to Austin after the circus. I couldn't resist a chance for another ride on that bike. I got a lot of kidding from people about going on it, but I wasn't going to let that prevent me from a 3-hour ride. And it was fun, if a little cold. It may sound strange to you, but I find it very peaceful. You're right out there, with the sky all around you and you can **smell** the fields. I think I like that the best.

We got into Austin late, slept, and then spent the day with Cat and Dean. The more I thought about that bike, the less I wanted to ride in a car across the desert. I love advertures, and here was one staring me in the face, daring me to go ahead and ride all the way to San Diego. I talked it over with Paul, because I wasn't sure if he would even want the company. He said it was nice having someone to talk to along the way. You have to take a lot of breaks on a bike, or you can be really exhausted. Then I talked to Cat and Dean, to figure out if losing a driver was going to cause problems. But everything seemed ok, so I thought "why not! I may never get another chance to do this!" I know how crazy it sounds, but adventures are what keeps me sane during those long, cold, boring winters. And I will never forget this adventure. The desert isn't always the same. Texas desert is different from Arizona desert, which is different from New Mexico desert. And California desert has dunes! The dunes at the California-Arizona border were incredible shades of blue and orange and purple from the setting sun. Just like in those western paintings! And the stars - we sat for our break the first night on a hill in Texas and just felt in awe of everything. The Milky Way was spread from one horizon to the other, barely leaving any room for sky. It was incredible. We rode in early morning, or after 5pm. It's too hot mid-day. We saw buffalo (really!) and huge cactus. I bought some turquoise jewellery (which I have a passion for the way some women do for diamonds) that was hand-made, and Paul bought those mocassins that lace up to the knees. I burned my leg on the muffler the very first day of the trip, so I had a bandaged leg all the way through it, and Paul looked like a lobster by the time we hit San Diego. We practically slinked into the hotel in San Diego. I was surprised they gave me my room, even with the reservation. Everyone acted real surprised that I was alive, at the con the next day.
I had a great time in San Diego, worked hard and saw more really nice people. The Cerebus T-shirts were selling real well, and I talked about doing some more characters with Graphitti T-shirts. Jan Mullaney was there (whom I haven't seen in ages), and I finally met Trina Robbins (a really sweet lady) and even had time to spend with Bill and Frankie Sienkiewicz. (HI!) Those two are among the nicest people I have met.

Thanks to everyone who came by the Aardvark-Vanaheim table to say hello. I can see that I've begun to run out of room this month, already, so I guess I'll wrap it up.

More adventures next month!!!

Deni

CEREBUS

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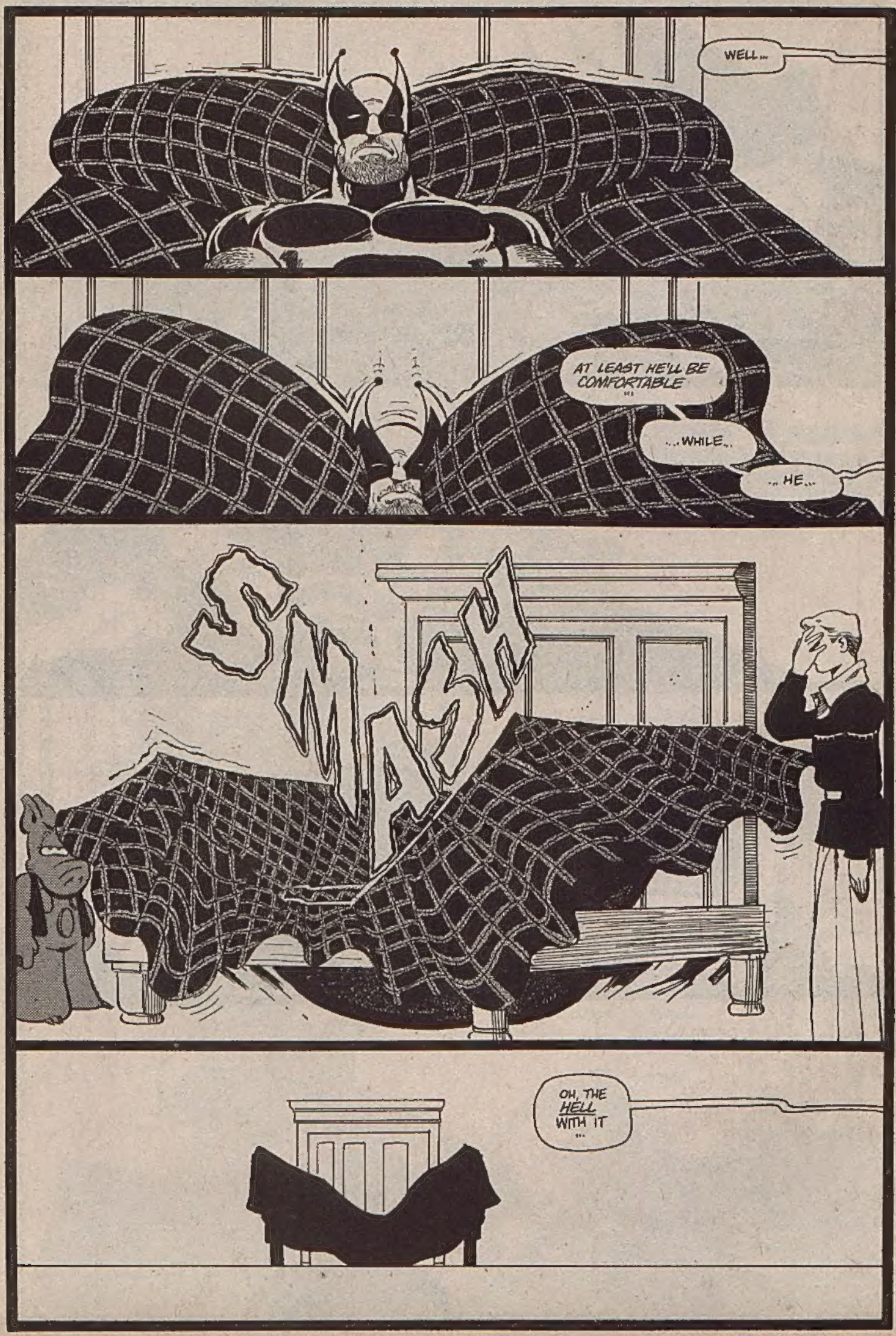
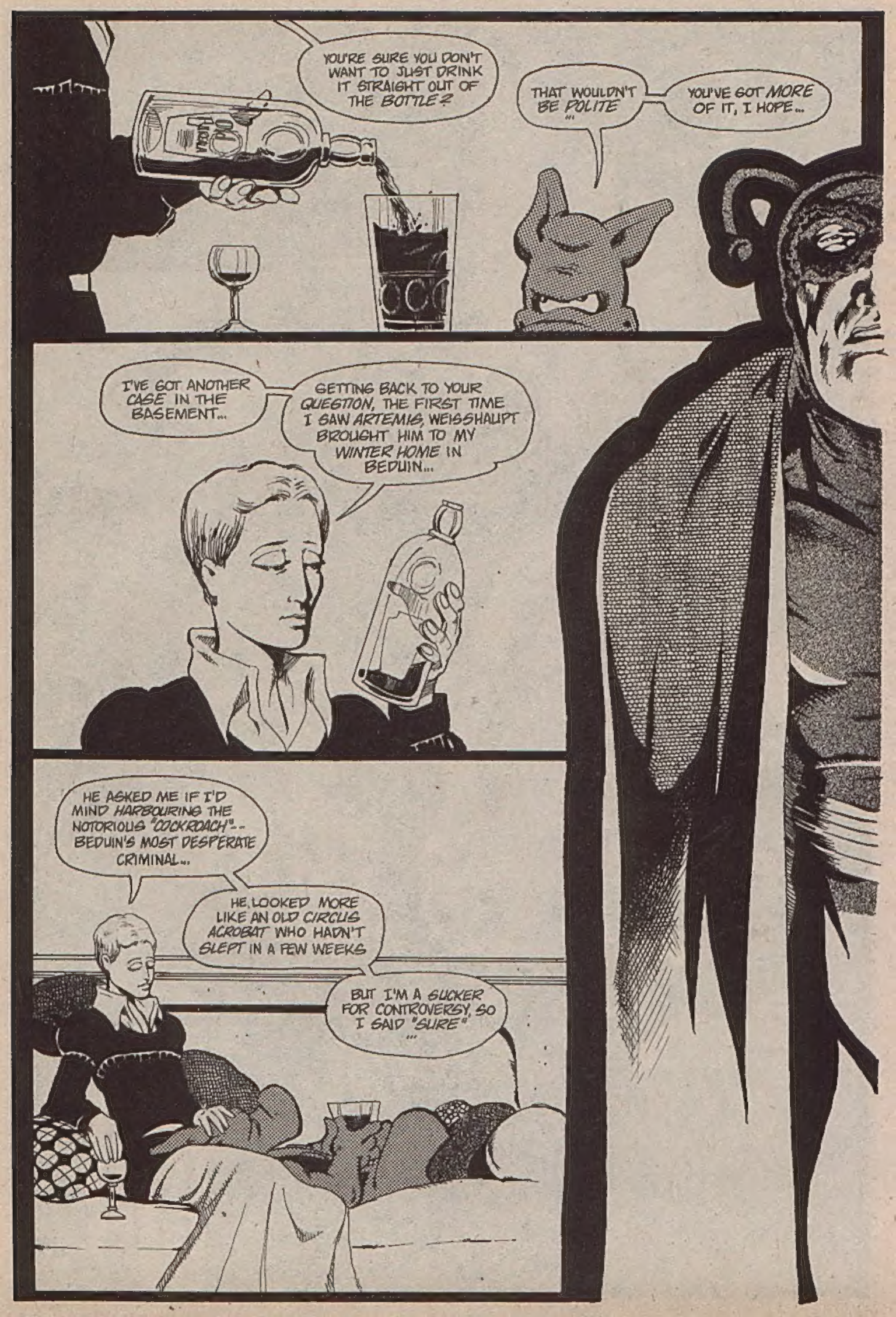
THE ORIGIN OF THE WOLVEROACH

NO-- HE'S NOT...
I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
MICHELLE...
JUDGING BY >GRUNT< HIS WEIGHT-- CEREBUS WOULD GUESS >PANT< THAT HE ATE A FEW HUNDRED POUNDS OF BALL BEARINGS
TRY TO MOVE HIM IN HERE
ALL RIGHT >PUFF< BUT CEREBUS IS WARNING YOU >PANT< RIGHT NOW....
CEREBUS PLANS >PUFF< TO CUT OFF ANYTHING >PANT< THAT DOESN'T FIT THROUGH THE DOOR THE FIRST >PUFF< TIME
WHAT >PUFF< ARE YOU >PANT< GOING TO DO WITH HIM?
NURSE HIM BACK TO HEALTH, HOLD HIS HAND, CALM HIM DOWN --THEN WATCH HIM FLY OUT THE WINDOW... SAME AS USUAL...

WHEW*
NO KIDDING


WELL...
AT LEAST HE'LL BE COMFORTABLE ...
...WHILE...
...HE...
SMASH
OH, THE HELL WITH IT ...


YOU'RE SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO JUST DRINK IT STRAIGHT OUT OF THE BOTTLE?
THAT WOULDN'T BE POLITE ...
YOU'VE GOT MORE OF IT, I HOPE...
I'VE GOT ANOTHER CASE IN THE BASEMENT...
GETTING BACK TO YOUR QUESTION, THE FIRST TIME I SAW ARTEMIS, WEISSHAUPT BROUGHT HIM TO MY WINTER HOME IN BEDUIN...
HE ASKED ME IF I'D MIND HARBOURING THE NOTORIOUS "COCKROACH"-- BEDUIN'S MOST DESPERATE CRIMINAL...
HE LOOKED MORE LIKE AN OLD CIRCUS ACROBAT WHO HADN'T SLEPT IN A FEW WEEKS
BUT I'M A SUCKER FOR CONTROVERSY, SO I SAID "SURE" ...

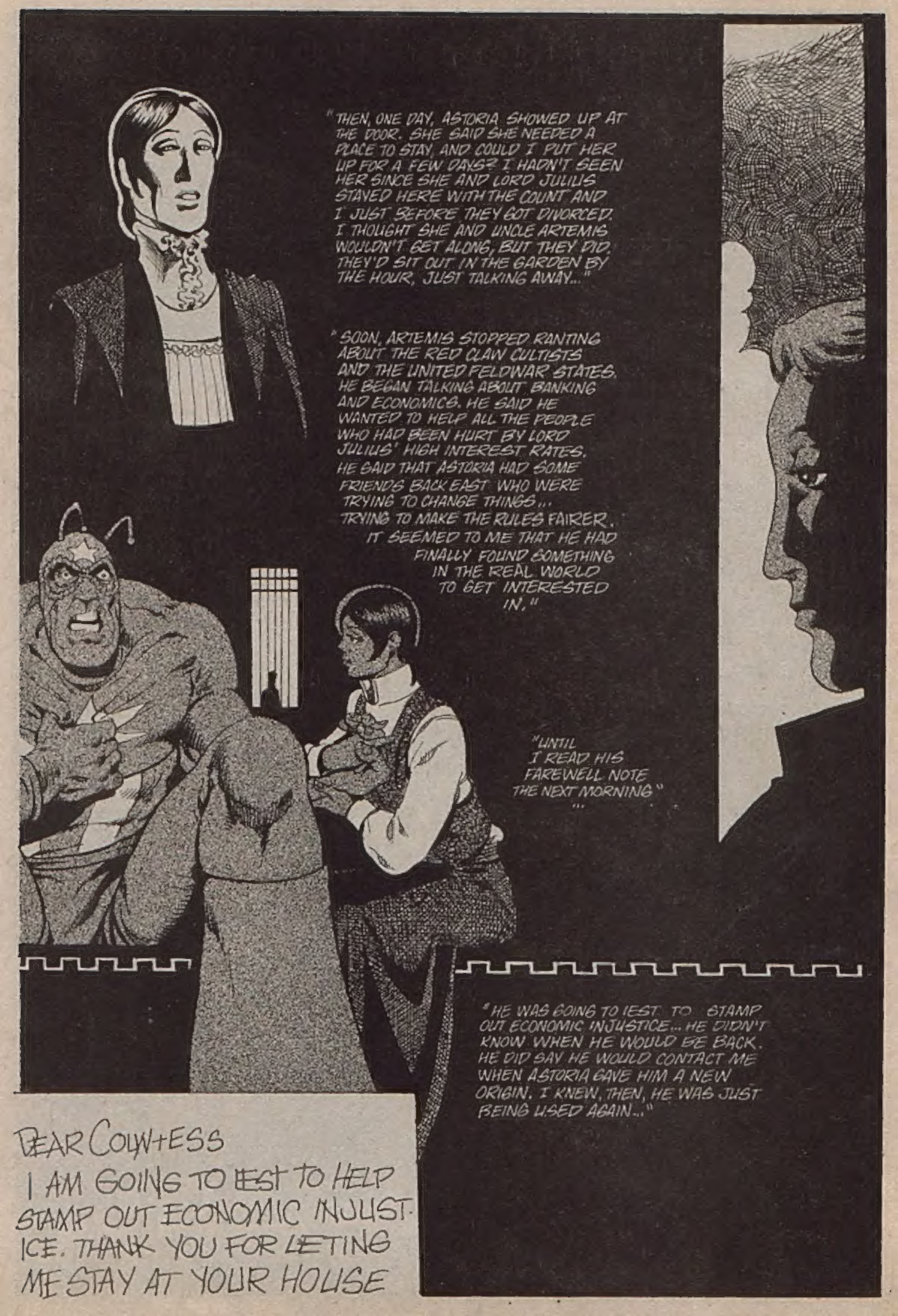
"FOR THE FIRST FEW DAYS, IT WAS GREAT... ANYTIME I NEEDED A JAR OPENED, HE WAS RIGHT THERE, GRABBING THE TOP WITH HIS FINGERS AND SNAPPING IT OFF. MIND YOU, HE DID THE SAME THING WITH THE SCREW-ON LIDS, BUT IT WAS THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTED. HE USED TO TELL ME ABOUT HIMSELF -- OR HE WOULD TRY TO ANYWAY. SOMETIMES IT WOULDN'T MAKE MUCH SENSE..."
"THE PEOPLE WHO KILLED HIS PARENTS SAWED THROUGH THE ORPHANAGE HE WAS SENT TO, KILLING ALL OF HIS LITTLE FRIENDS, BUT WEISSHAUPT HAD A SECRET FORMULA THAT WOULD MAKE THEM PAY..."
"WEISSHAUPT CAME AND GOT HIM LATER THAT WEEK AND I DIDN'T SEE ARTEMIS AGAIN UNTIL THE FOLLOWING WINTER -- 1412"

"THAT TIME, HE STAYED FOR ALMOST TWO WEEKS. WEISSHAUPT WAS BUSY SENDING OUT HIS "MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT," PROMISING THAT THE FIRST OF HIS RACE OF SUPERMEN WAS BEING TRAINED IN THE SUBURBS AND SOON WOULD BE READY TO LEAD AN ALL-OUT ATTACK ON THE HSIFAN KHANATE..."

"ARTEMIS, OF COURSE, THREW HIMSELF INTO THE ROLE WHOLE-HEARTEDLY..."

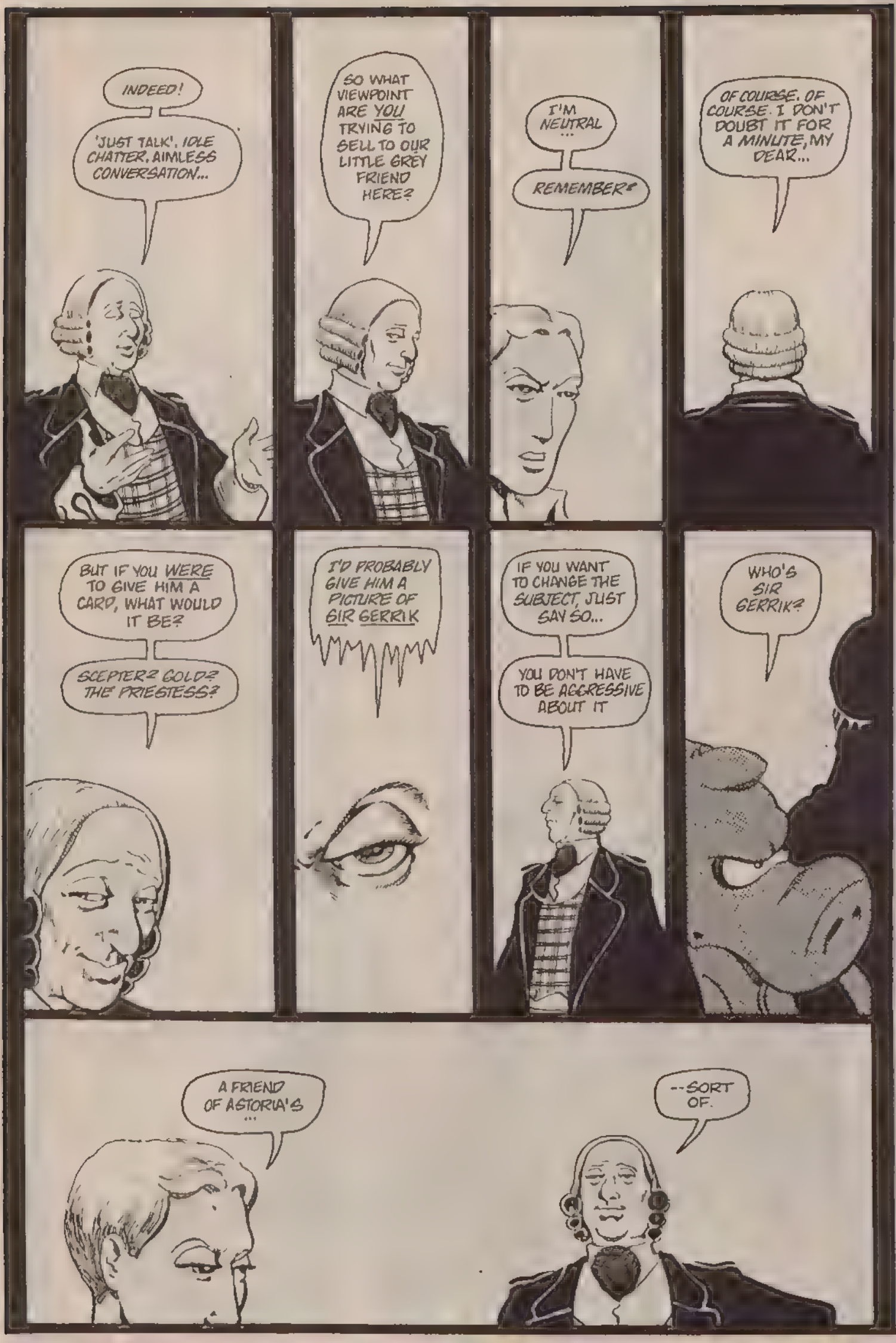
"HE WAS IN AND OUT ALL THROUGH THAT WINTER, SELLING WAR BONDS, LIFTING WEIGHTS ..."

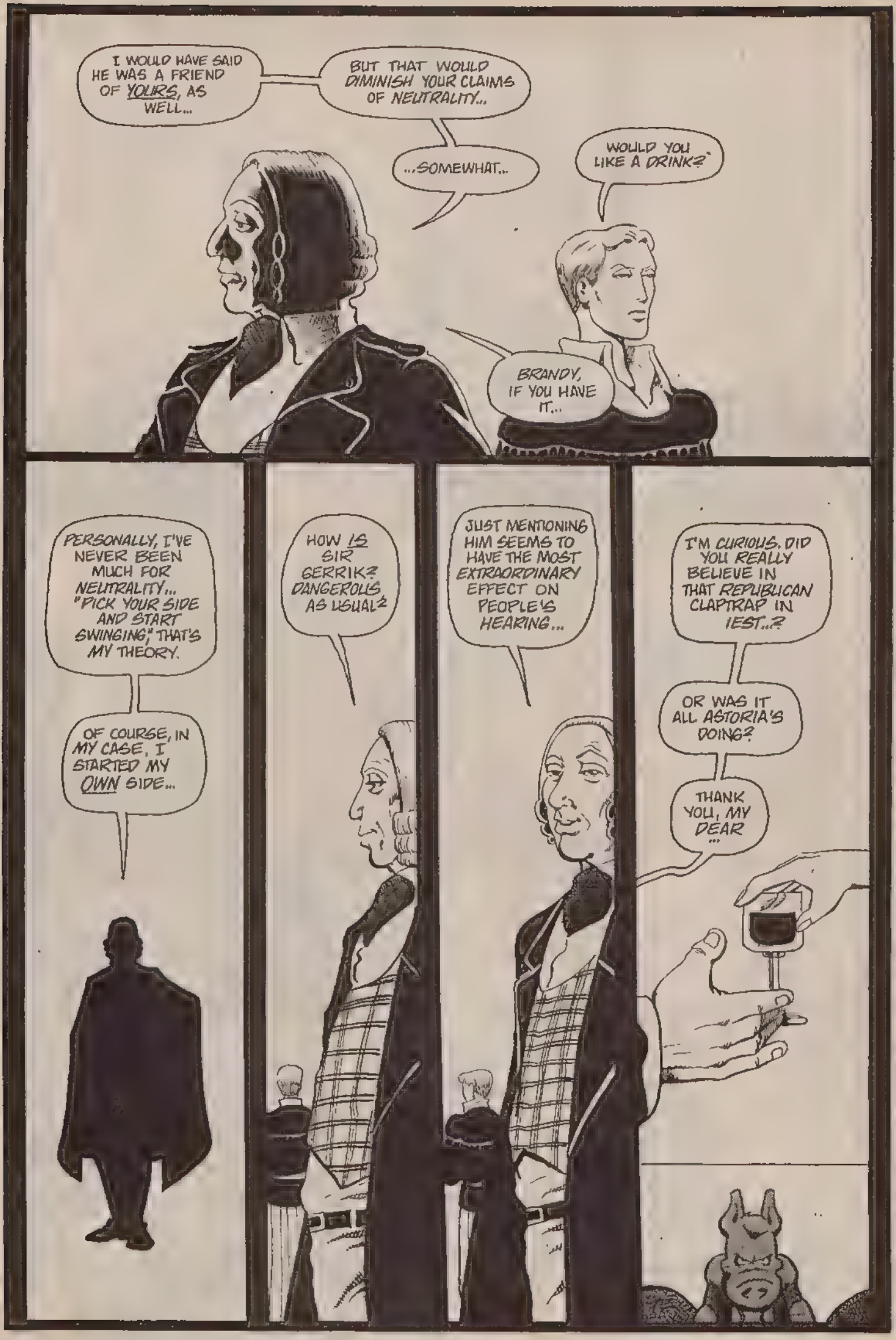
WHEN WEISSHAUPT MOVED TOO SOON TO TRY AND ELIMINATE THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL, ARTEMIS BECAME ONE OF THE FIRST CASUALTIES. WITHOUT HIS "COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF" HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. WEISSHAUPT HAD SAVED HIS OWN SKIN BY OFFERING TO STREAM-LINE THE MILITARY BUREAUCRACY IN LOWER FELDA, BUT HE WAS ALSO MAINTAINING A VERY LOW PROFILE. I BROUGHT ARTEMIS HERE IN THE HOPES THAT HE WOULD FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH HIS LIFE. HE SULKED AROUND FOR MONTHS, WAITING TO HEAR FROM WEISSHAUPT. NOTHING CAME.


"THEN, ONE DAY, ASTORIA SHOWED UP AT THE DOOR. SHE SAID SHE NEEDED A PLACE TO STAY, AND COULD I PUT HER UP FOR A FEW DAYS? I HADN'T SEEN HER SINCE SHE AND LORD JULIUS STAYED HERE WITH THE COUNT AND I JUST BEFORE THEY GOT DIVORCED. I THOUGHT SHE AND UNCLE ARTEMIS WOULDN'T GET ALONG, BUT THEY DID. THEY'D SIT OUT IN THE GARDEN BY THE HOUR, JUST TALKING AWAY..."
"SOON, ARTEMIS STOPPED RANTING ABOUT THE RED CLAW CULTISTS AND THE UNITED FELDWAR STATES. HE BEGAN TALKING ABOUT BANKING AND ECONOMICS. HE SAID HE WANTED TO HELP ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN HURT BY LORD JULIUS' HIGH INTEREST RATES. HE SAID THAT ASTORIA HAD SOME FRIENDS BACK EAST WHO WERE TRYING TO CHANGE THINGS... TRYING TO MAKE THE RULES FAIRER. IT SEEMED TO ME THAT HE HAD FINALLY FOUND SOMETHING IN THE REAL WORLD TO GET INTERESTED IN."
"UNTIL I READ HIS FAREWELL NOTE THE NEXT MORNING"
...
"HE WAS GOING TO IEST TO STAMP OUT ECONOMIC INJUSTICE... HE DIDN'T KNOW WHEN HE WOULD BE BACK. HE DID SAY HE WOULD CONTACT ME WHEN ASTORIA GAVE HIM A NEW ORIGIN. I KNEW, THEN, HE WAS JUST BEING USED AGAIN..."
DEAR COLWTESS
I AM GOING TO IEST TO HELP STAMP OUT ECONOMIC INJUST. ICE. THANK YOU FOR LETING ME STAY AT YOUR HOUSE

"OVER THE COURSE OF THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, HE WOULD APPEAR IN ONE OF THE WINDOWS FROM TIME TO TIME -- USUALLY ON THE SECOND FLOOR -- I GUESS HE THOUGHT IT WAS MORE IMPRESSIVE THAT WAY OR SOMETHING. HE'D STARTED CHANGING HIS PERSONALITIES FASTER AND FASTER..."
READING BETWEEN THE LINES, I COULD SEE THAT ASTORIA HAD DROPPED HIM WHEN YOU CAME ALONG. HE WAS CRUSHED, BUT COULDN'T SHOW IT -- HE TOLD ME HOW HE PLOTTED AGAINST THE TWO OF YOU... BUT, WHEN ASTORIA MADE HIM YOUR BODYGUARD HE ACCEPTED IT HAPPILY, THINKING SHE WANTED HIM BACK."
WHEN YOUR GOVERNMENT FELL, ALL I COULD THINK WAS 'POOR ARTEMIS.' I KNEW THAT ASTORIA WOULDN'T LIFT A FINGER TO SAVE HIM. A FEW DAYS LATER, I GOT A LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT TO THE ARCHBISHOP, A FATHER ARTEMIS ROACH, ADVISING ME TO FORSAKE MY SORDID LIFESTYLE AND GIVE ALL MY HICKIES TO THE LIVING TARIM."
"THE LETTER REASSURED ME THAT HE WAS -- I WOULDN'T SAY 'OKAY' -- BUT AT LEAST 'NOT IN ANY PHYSICAL DANGER.'"
A VERY PRETTY LITTLE STORY, MY DEAR...

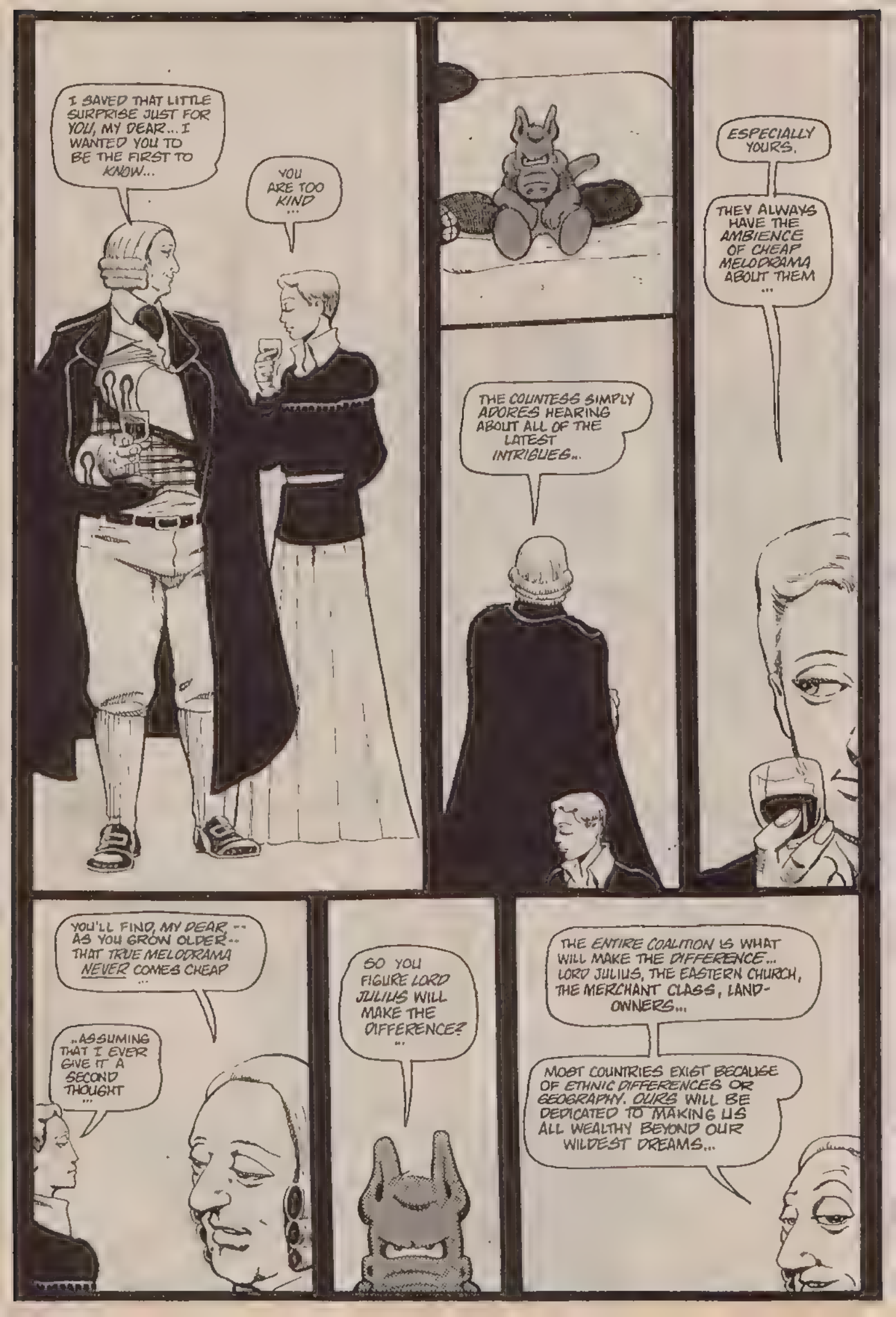
WEISSHAUPT.
YOU NEVER DID BELIEVE IN KNOCKING DID YOU?
YOU LEFT IT WIDE OPEN WHEN UNCLE ARTEMIS CAME IN...
BESIDES, I WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED THIS TOUCHING LITTLE SCENE FOR THE WORLD.
DOES.. ASTORIA KNOW ABOUT THIS? ...
CEREBUS DOESN'T GIVE A DAMN WHO KNOWS
REALLY?
NOT EVEN JAKA?
CEREBUS!
DON'T LET HIM PROVOKE YOU...
IT'S JUST TALK...

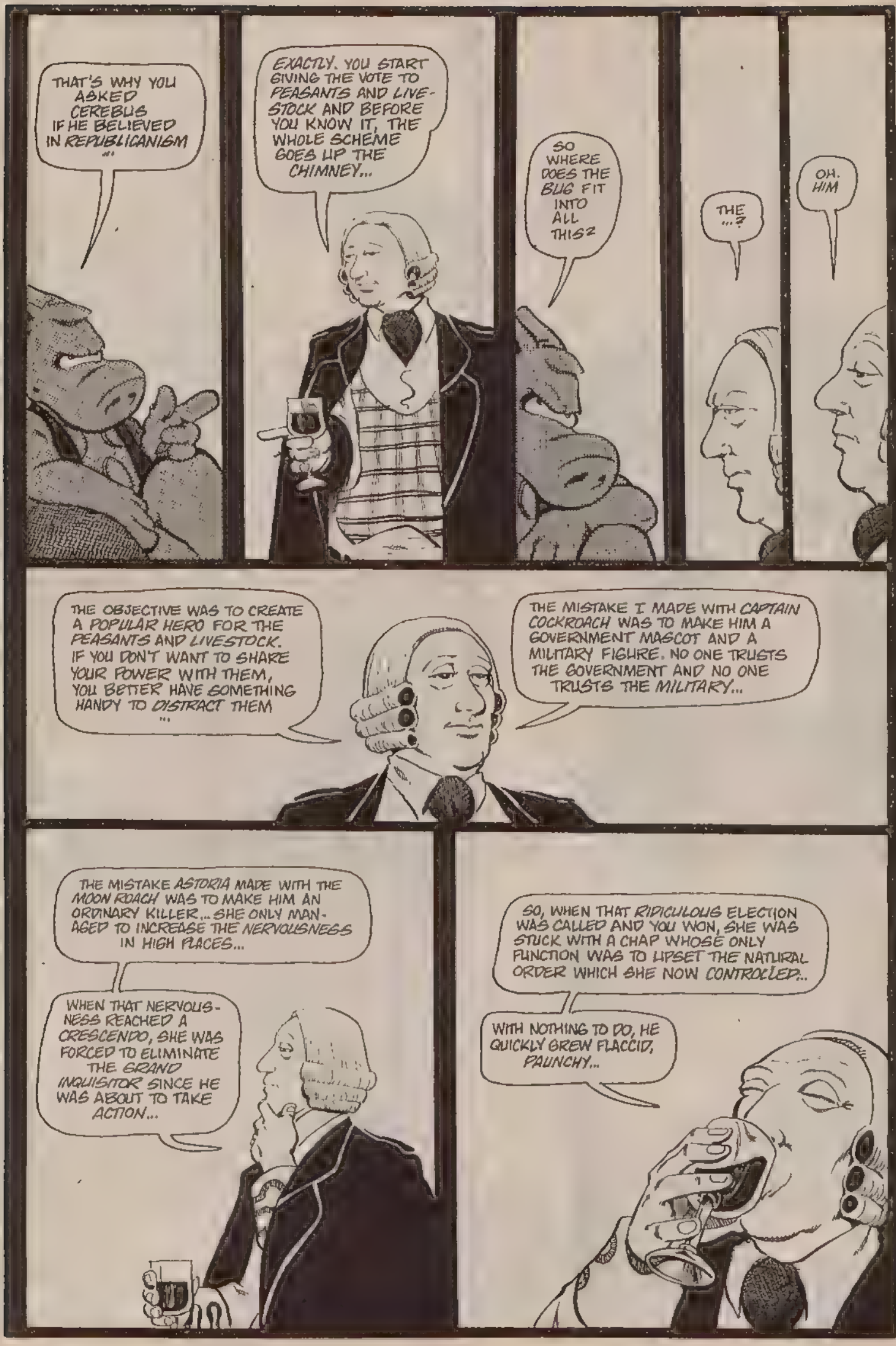

INDEED!
'JUST TALK', IDLE CHATTER, AIMLESS CONVERSATION...
SO WHAT VIEWPOINT ARE YOU TRYING TO SELL TO OUR LITTLE GREY FRIEND HERE?
I'M NEUTRAL ...
REMEMBER?
OF COURSE. OF COURSE. I DON'T DOUBT IT FOR A MINUTE, MY DEAR...
BUT IF YOU WERE TO GIVE HIM A CARD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?
SCEPTER? GOLD? THE PRIESTESS?
I'D PROBABLY GIVE HIM A PICTURE OF SIR GERRIK
IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE SUBJECT, JUST SAY SO...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AGGRESSIVE ABOUT IT
WHO'S SIR GERRIK?
A FRIEND OF ASTORIA'S ...
--SORT OF.

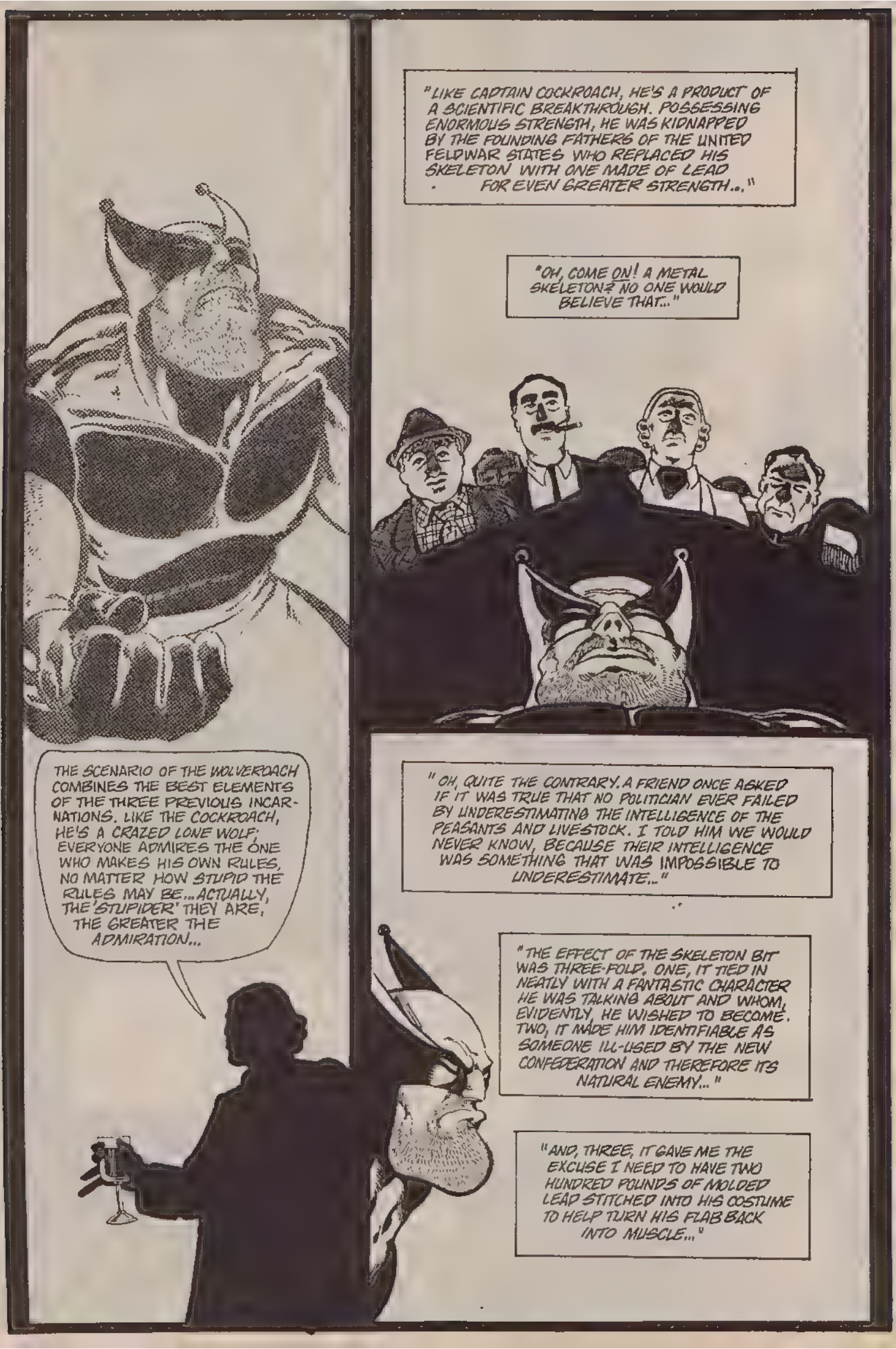

I WOULD HAVE SAID HE WAS A FRIEND OF YOURS, AS WELL...
BUT THAT WOULD DIMINISH YOUR CLAIMS OF NEUTRALITY...
...SOMEWHAT...
WOULD YOU LIKE A DRINK?
BRANDY, IF YOU HAVE IT...
PERSONALLY, I'VE NEVER BEEN MUCH FOR NEUTRALITY... "PICK YOUR SIDE AND START SWINGING," THAT'S MY THEORY.
OF COURSE, IN MY CASE, I STARTED MY OWN SIDE...
HOW IS SIR GERRIK? DANGEROUS AS USUAL?
JUST MENTIONING HIM SEEMS TO HAVE THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY EFFECT ON PEOPLE'S HEARING...
I'M CURIOUS. DID YOU REALLY BELIEVE IN THAT REPUBLICAN CLAPTRAP IN TEST..?
OR WAS IT ALL ASTORIA'S DOING?
THANK YOU, MY DEAR ...

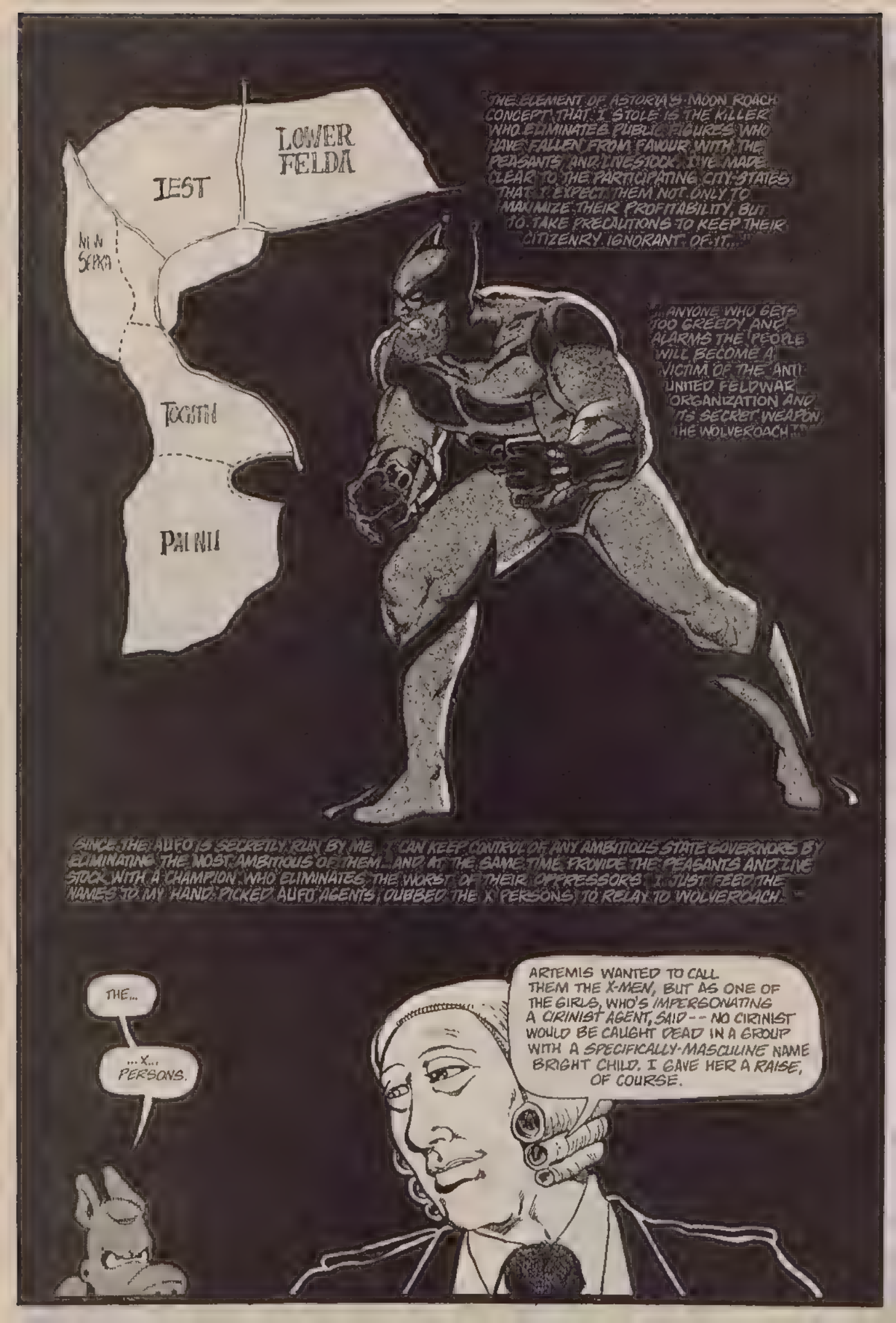
THAT ALL DEPENDS ...
WHAT REPUBLICAN CLAPTRAP ARE YOU REFERRING TO?
ALL OF THIS BUSINESS OF GIVING THE VOTE TO FARMHANDS AND FISH MERCHANTS ...
I MEAN, REALLY!
YOU'RE RIGHT.
CEREBUS THOUGHT IT SHOULD'VE INCLUDED WHORES AND BUMS AS WELL...
... PARDON CEREBUS' LANGUAGE
I'M A BIG GIRL...
I CAN HANDLE IT.
AND WHAT, DARE I ASK, DO YOU SEE AS THE BENEFIT OF ALLOWING "SOILED DOVES" TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS?
IT WOULD PUT PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENTS TO BE MORE RESPONSIBLE ABOUT THEIR DEBTS AND LOANS...
CEREBUS HASN'T MET A WHORE, YET, WHO COULD ABIDE GIVING ANYONE CREDIT...
KOFF
ARE YOU SURE THAT YOU DON'T ...
I'M FINE... I'M FINE
I JUST SWALLOWED THE WRONG WAY THAT'S ALL ...

I CAN SEE NOW WHY YOU AND LORD JULIUS GOT ALONG SO FAMOUSLY...
YOU'RE A LOT ALIKE...
WHICH BRINGS ME TO THE POINT OF THIS VISIT ...
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE PRIME MINISTER OF IEST AGAIN...?
NOT MUCH...
CEREBUS HAS HAD ENOUGH OF ELECTIONS TO LAST HIM A LIFETIME...
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT AN ELECTION?
YOU WANT THE JOB, IT'S YOURS.
I'M READY TO MAKE MY MOVE WITH THE UNITED FELDWAR STATES ...
WHAT? AGAIN?
THIS TIME IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT. I HAVE SIGNED AGREEMENTS ...
...LOWER FELDA...
..NEW SEFRA...
...TOGITH...
...IEST.
OH, YES ...
AND PALNU.
PALNU!?

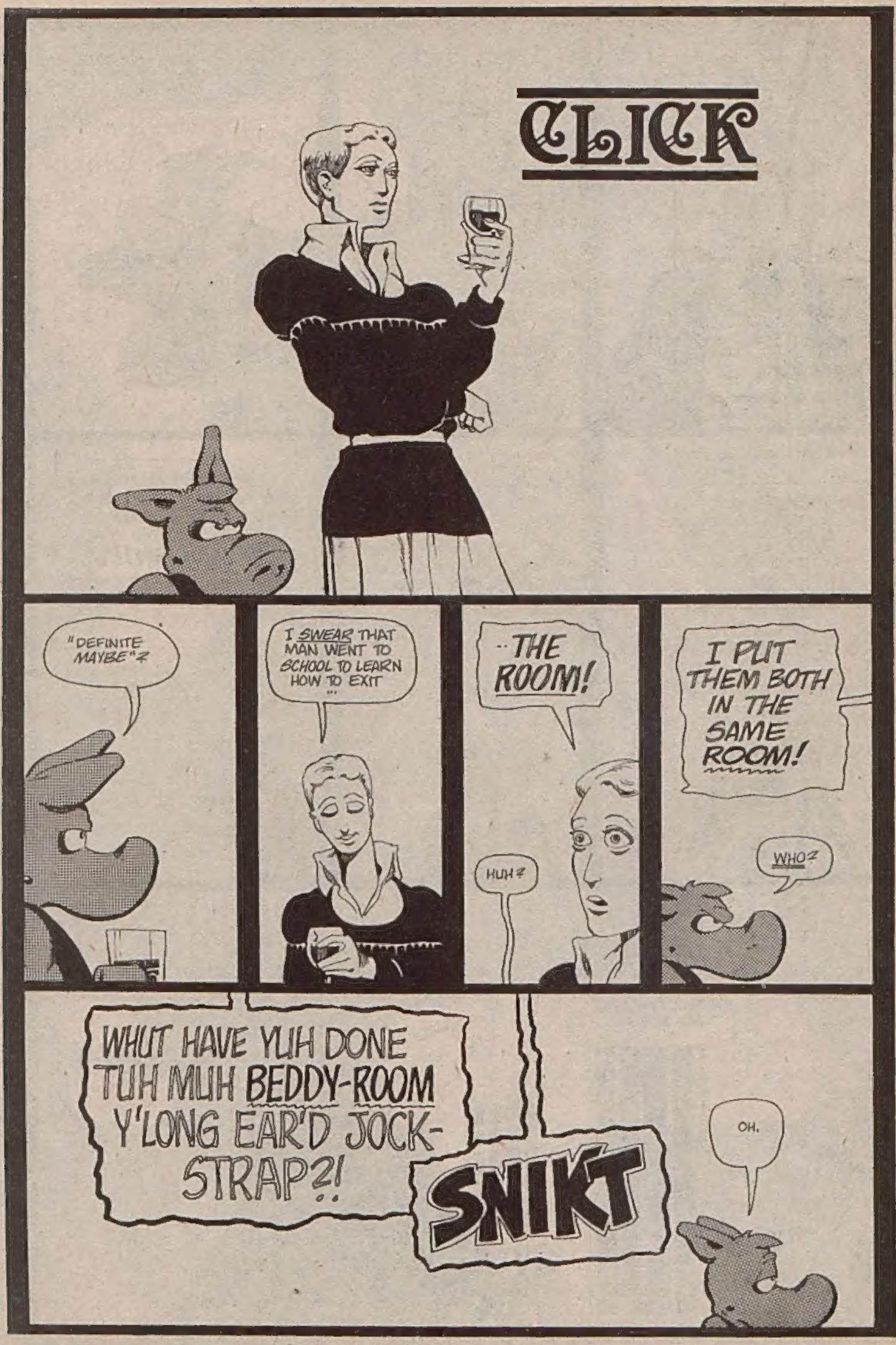

I SAVED THAT LITTLE SURPRISE JUST FOR YOU, MY DEAR... I WANTED YOU TO BE THE FIRST TO KNOW...
YOU ARE TOO KIND ...
THE COUNTESS SIMPLY ADORES HEARING ABOUT ALL OF THE LATEST INTRIGUES..
ESPECIALLY YOURS.
THEY ALWAYS HAVE THE AMBIENCE OF CHEAP MELODRAMA ABOUT THEM ...
YOU'LL FIND, MY DEAR -- AS YOU GROW OLDER-- THAT TRUE MELODRAMA NEVER COMES CHEAP ...
..ASSUMING THAT I EVER GIVE IT A SECOND THOUGHT ...
SO YOU FIGURE LORD JULIUS WILL MAKE THE DIFFERENCE? ...
THE ENTIRE COALITION IS WHAT WILL MAKE THE DIFFERENCE... LORD JULIUS, THE EASTERN CHURCH, THE MERCHANT CLASS, LAND-OWNERS...
MOST COUNTRIES EXIST BECAUSE OF ETHNIC DIFFERENCES OR GEOGRAPHY. OURS WILL BE DEDICATED TO MAKING US ALL WEALTHY BEYOND OUR WILDEST DREAMS...


THAT'S WHY YOU ASKED CEREBUS IF HE BELIEVED IN REPUBLICANISM ...
EXACTLY. YOU START GIVING THE VOTE TO PEASANTS AND LIVESTOCK AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, THE WHOLE SCHEME GOES UP THE CHIMNEY...
SO WHERE DOES THE BUG FIT INTO ALL THIS?
THE ...?
OH. HIM
THE OBJECTIVE WAS TO CREATE A POPULAR HERO FOR THE PEASANTS AND LIVESTOCK. IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SHARE YOUR POWER WITH THEM, YOU BETTER HAVE SOMETHING HANDY TO DISTRACT THEM ...
THE MISTAKE I MADE WITH CAPTAIN COCKROACH WAS TO MAKE HIM A GOVERNMENT MASCOT AND A MILITARY FIGURE. NO ONE TRUSTS THE GOVERNMENT AND NO ONE TRUSTS THE MILITARY...
THE MISTAKE ASTORIA MADE WITH THE MOON ROACH WAS TO MAKE HIM AN ORDINARY KILLER... SHE ONLY MANAGED TO INCREASE THE NERVOUSNESS IN HIGH PLACES...
WHEN THAT NERVOUSNESS REACHED A CRESCENDO, SHE WAS FORCED TO ELIMINATE THE GRAND INQUISITOR SINCE HE WAS ABOUT TO TAKE ACTION...
SO, WHEN THAT RIDICULOUS ELECTION WAS CALLED AND YOU WON, SHE WAS STUCK WITH A CHAP WHOSE ONLY FUNCTION WAS TO UPSET THE NATURAL ORDER WHICH SHE NOW CONTROLLED...
WITH NOTHING TO DO, HE QUICKLY GREW FLACCID, PAUNCHY...


"LIKE CAPTAIN COCKROACH, HE'S A PRODUCT OF A SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH. POSSESSING ENORMOUS STRENGTH, HE WAS KIDNAPPED BY THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE UNITED FELDWAR STATES WHO REPLACED HIS SKELETON WITH ONE MADE OF LEAD FOR EVEN GREATER STRENGTH..."
"OH, COME ON! A METAL SKELETON? NO ONE WOULD BELIEVE THAT..."
THE SCENARIO OF THE WOLVERDACH COMBINES THE BEST ELEMENTS OF THE THREE PREVIOUS INCARNATIONS. LIKE THE COCKROACH, HE'S A CRAZED LONE WOLF; EVERYONE ADMIRES THE ONE WHO MAKES HIS OWN RULES, NO MATTER HOW STUPID THE RULES MAY BE...ACTUALLY, THE 'STUPIDER' THEY ARE, THE GREATER THE ADMIRATION...
"OH, QUITE THE CONTRARY. A FRIEND ONCE ASKED IF IT WAS TRUE THAT NO POLITICIAN EVER FAILED BY UNDERESTIMATING THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE PEASANTS AND LIVESTOCK. I TOLD HIM WE WOULD NEVER KNOW, BECAUSE THEIR INTELLIGENCE WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDERESTIMATE..."
"THE EFFECT OF THE SKELETON BIT WAS THREE-FOLD. ONE, IT TIED IN NEATLY WITH A FANTASTIC CHARACTER HE WAS TALKING ABOUT AND WHOM, EVIDENTLY, HE WISHED TO BECOME. TWO, IT MADE HIM IDENTIFIABLE AS SOMEONE ILL-USED BY THE NEW CONFEDERATION AND THEREFORE ITS NATURAL ENEMY..."
"AND, THREE, IT GAVE ME THE EXCUSE I NEED TO HAVE TWO HUNDRED POUNDS OF MOLDED LEAD STITCHED INTO HIS COSTUME TO HELP TURN HIS FLAB BACK INTO MUSCLE..."


LOWER FELDA
WEST
NEW SERKA
TOGITH
PALNU
THE ELEMENT OF ASTORIA'S MOON ROACH CONCEPT THAT I STOLE IS THE KILLER WHO ELIMINATES PUBLIC FIGURES WHO HAVE FALLEN FROM FAVOUR WITH THE PEASANTS AND LIVESTOCK. I'VE MADE CLEAR TO THE PARTICIPATING CITY-STATES THAT I EXPECT THEM NOT ONLY TO MAXIMIZE THEIR PROFITABILITY, BUT TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS TO KEEP THEIR CITIZENRY IGNORANT OF IT...
...ANYONE WHO GETS TOO GREEDY AND ALARMS THE PEOPLE WILL BECOME A VICTIM OF THE ANTI UNITED FELDWAR ORGANIZATION AND ITS SECRET WEAPON THE WOLVEROACH!!
SINCE THE AUFO IS SECRETLY RUN BY ME, I CAN KEEP CONTROL OF ANY AMBITIOUS STATE GOVERNORS BY ELIMINATING THE MOST AMBITIOUS OF THEM... AND AT THE SAME TIME, PROVIDE THE PEASANTS AND LIVESTOCK WITH A CHAMPION WHO ELIMINATES THE WORST OF THEIR OPPRESSORS! I JUST FEED THE NAMES TO MY HAND-PICKED AUFO AGENTS, DUBBED THE X PERSONS, TO RELAY TO WOLVEROACH.
THE...
...X... PERSONS.
ARTEMIS WANTED TO CALL THEM THE X-MEN, BUT AS ONE OF THE GIRLS, WHO'S IMPERSONATING A CIRINIST AGENT, SAID -- NO CIRINIST WOULD BE CAUGHT DEAD IN A GROUP WITH A SPECIFICALLY-MASCULINE NAME BRIGHT CHILD. I GAVE HER A RAISE, OF COURSE.

SO -- WHAT ABOUT IT? YOU WANT TO BE PRIME MINISTER AGAIN?
YOUR NAME IS AT THE TOP OF A VERY SHORT LIST OF CANDIDATES...
AND THE CHURCH HAS AGREED TO ABIDE BY ANY DECISION I MAKE....
NOT ONLY DOES CEREBUS NEVER WANT TO BE PRIME MINISTER AGAIN...
NOT ONLY DOES CEREBUS NEVER WANT TO BE INVOLVED WITH LORD JULIUS AGAIN-- EVER--
NOT ONLY DOES CEREBUS NEVER WANT TO BE WITHIN SPITTING DISTANCE OF THE CHURCH AGAIN, EVER
...BUT IF CEREBUS NEVER SEES YOUR UGLY, SMIRKING, SNOBBISH MUG AGAIN, CEREBUS WILL BE DE-LIGHTED
OKAY -- LET'S LEAVE IT AS A "DEFINITE MAYBE" FOR THE TIME BEING ...
TA-TA, ALL...


CLICK
"DEFINITE MAYBE"?
I SWEAR THAT MAN WENT TO SCHOOL TO LEARN HOW TO EXIT ...
..THE ROOM!
HUH?
I PUT THEM BOTH IN THE SAME ROOM!
WHO?
WHUT HAVE YUH DONE TUH MUH BEDDY-ROOM Y'LONG EAR'D JOCK-STRAP?!
SNIKT
OH.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dave:

CEREBUS #51 was the funniest story I've read in a long time.

Anthony Padilla
3701 Oakgreen Avenue N.,
Stillwater, MN., 55082

P.S. I have a problem you maybe can help me with. See, I made a bet with a friend that you'd print my letter and I was wondering.....

What?! Print a letter just to help someone win a stupit bet? You must be out of your mind (send half of your ill gotten gains to the above address).

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Dear Dave and Deni:

Just another gushy fan letter here - save it until you've read a nasty one, then console yourself with praise. Actually, I'm not sure how valuable my praise would be considered, not being a comic artist, but as a new appreciator of comics I buy your comic. Does that make me have some kind of judgement in the matter of comics enjoyment?

I love your aardvark! What a hero. Watching him go through his paces in the last year has been a hoot (out here, that's our word for "having fun"). It's been interesting picking out all the different background shading patterns, the different ways the characters are drawn, and most of all, the story lines. I have never seen one comic with characters drawn in such different ways - Cerebus as opposed to Lord Julius, Perce from way back, Moon Roach and the farmer with the last vote ... now you can tell I don't read many comics. I don't *like* most comics. I read X-Men, New Mutants, and Elfquest; I don't expect anything from the first two, and I groan over the hokey dialogue in Elfquest. But Cerebus is never disappointing.

Salut to you for Elfguest - "nothing makes me feel cuter than a good frolic". The elf wearing the bearskin must have been named "Cuter."

And as an unpublished writer, I appreciate the high quality of the dialogue in Cerebus. Everything that passes before my eyes gets examined as to how I would have written it, but I never "rewrite" Cerebus, Elfquest, maybe, but not your comic - it works too well for me to interfere with it. Trouble is, I expect this sort of success from all comics/fiction/writing and rant & rail against sloppy, careless writing in any context. Cerebus is relaxing after all that ranting.

Praise comes in small doses, so this is time to sign off. Looking forward to issue #53, I bid you good bye.

Paula Johanson
#2-464 Gorge Road East,
Victoria, British Columbia
V8T 2W4

It was a very difficult process for me to go through, to reach the conclusion that I could populate Cerebus with characters rendered in a variety of lines from super-realistic to super-cartoony. I'm still not certain if some of the combinations really work, so I appreciate the vote of confidence, Paula.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Dear Dave & Deni,

Congratulations upon issue #51 of Cerebus. You have produced yet another masterpiece. The issue resembled a giant coda, an epilogue, ending Cerebus' previous life. We are treated to a last look at most of the supporting characters who have plagued the aardvark's life these last 25 issues. (Actually, the term "last look" is a misnomer, for no doubt some of these characters will pop up again in Cerebus' life, but I am sure that this is the last we'll see of them for awhile).

It is also funny as hell. A giant burlesque, we watch as Cerebus' desire to kick ass is continually frustrated by one event or another. And after 25 issues of diplomacy and constraint, our favorite aardvark is seething with a lot of frustration and anger. Dave, you have the spirit of the Marx Brothers routines down perfectly. Too many times to count, I found myself chuckling aloud, with an occasional outright gaffaw. I look forward with great eagerness to the next phase of the life of Cerebus.

I do, however, have a gripe which has nothing to do with your work. I strontly object to the scathing, sarcastic tone of your answers in the letters page. Some of the letters printed are thoughtful commentaries, while others are downright foolish. *All*, however, are deserving of respect. They are all written by people who support your book and who, in one way or another, care about it enough to share their opinions. Too often your answer is insulting, petulantly suggesting folks stop buying the book if they don't like the direction you're taking with it.

I have no qualms about your right as creator to write the book as you see fit. This is as it should be. Cerebus is your creation, and a brilliant one. Your readers, however, deserve respect, not denigration. If you feel some of the letters you receive are stupid, I suggest an obvious solution: don't print them. No creation is immune from foolish criticism; just read the letters page in Elfquest. Compare, however, the Pini's

Aardvark Vanaheim photo by Deni

Rob and Derek (or Derek and Rob) McCulloch...No Comment.

Aardvark Vanaheim photo by Deni

Dave with Toronto Globe & Mail reporter, Mathew Fraser, at Toronto's Silver Snail Comic Shop on The Canadian Tour.

patient response, a model of restraint and moderation, with your hot-headed, vehement denunciations.

Take a line from Cerebus himself, Dave. As the publisher of a major small-press comic book, you are very much in the public eye. Learn to practice diplomacy. Temper your initial response. The comic buying public's perception of you is important, for it can have a material effect upon the success or failure of your art. I am being quite selfish in the advice, for you see I don't ever want to stop reading Cerebus; at least, not until issue #300, or until you decide to cease publication of your own free will.

Lon Levy
154 Avenue P.
Brooklyn, NY., 11204

I answered this criticism last issue, but since your letter is shaded a little differently, some of my points probably need some elaboration. I tried to just "not print" the letters of criticism, but that only tends to provoke the people who don't see their points being represented. I also tried being reasonable and patient, but I felt there was something wrong with that -- basically what I said last issue. In conversation, I wouldn't tolerate someone being pointedly rude or insulting (I wouldn't hit him, but I would certainly jump in with a "What the hell do you mean by that?") so why tolerate it on a letters page where they know I'm the only one they are addressing. I think the fact that the letters have gone from being rude and insulting to merely criticizing means my comments had some effect, don't you?.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Dear Dave & Deni,

I've collected CEREBUS from #16 on up and I've read them all, of course, through SWORDS OF CEREBUS. As a 6th grade teacher and English Major I do a lot of reading and I've always considered CEREBUS as a real dessert. NEIL THE HORSE and JOURNEY are also becoming books that I await hungrily.

Someday I hope to get an original drawing by Dave at a convention. I have a few now by other artists (framed and hanging proudly on my living room walls). The kids in my class also enjoy very much when I take my art collection to school. It introduces them to different styles of and different comics that they never knew existed.

Well, I know it takes a very special talent to write CEREBUS and I hope that talent stays with you for many, many years to come, Dave. And don't think that your great job as editor of AARDVARK-VANAHEIM isn't appreciated, Deni. Keep 'em coming.

Dave Schollaert
2128 Priscilla NW.,
Massillon, OHIO 44646

Thank you for your kind words, Dave. Just for the record, Deni is the publisher. Aardvark-Vanaheim (for the moment, at least) is a company made up of one-man artist/writer/ editors. It's the basis of our publishing philosophy and (I suspect) the reason for our success.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Dear Dave,

I've been trying to think of a way to write this letter that won't seem ridiculous, unlikely or exagerrated. I've been thinking long enough on that subject to realise that it will probably seem that way no matter what, so here you are:

I am stunned. Completely in awe. I have been reading Cerebus since No. 5, and the first time I saw a copy I knew somehow that it was something special. Since then you've made me laugh, intrigued me with your originality and complexity, held me in suspense and done all the things that a writer should do. But after reading issue No. 50 I have been in a state of shock. From the great cover inwards it was like a magnetic attraction to every word and image. I

thought that deafening "Click" on page fourteen was monumental enough, but when Cerebus broke down and embraced the elf I felt like I'd been hit between the eyes with a hammer.

It was the most beautiful moment I have ever had reading comics, and I still go over and over that issue, just about falling apart myself when I reach page seventeen.

I have no doubt that very soon (if not already) "High Society" will become recognised as a true classic. Not just as a piece of graphic art but as a complex novel in it's own right. I can't think of anything that has ever blown me away like this. The control, continuity of character, patient building of tension deserve more acclaim than I could supply with a whole page of adjectives.

"Cerebus" is not available in Tasmania incidentally, and it means either mail order or a trip to the Australian mainland to buy copies. I haven't come across anyone else in the state that owns any "Cerebus", but I hope one day to find someone.

A thought occurred to me today. If everything continues as it has been, issue No. 300 will be published shortly before your (and Cerebus') 50th birthday. If you can write like this at 29, what can we expect to be reading in 2004?

Cerebus has really done things to help change views on the power of "comic" art. I am very thankful that, against what I assume must have been quite hefty odds, "Cerebus" is even in print.

Thank you and Deni very much.

Tim Gadd
5A Raminea Road,
Lindisfarne 7015
Tasmania, Australia

Actually, that's an interesting point you made. The natural inclination is to think one would write better at 50 (actually 46) than at 27, bet there are examples of people burning out at a variety of ages. It's very possible (knock wood that it doesn't happen) that I could hit bad stretches of varying lengths. How long could I do a bad book before it hurt sales. Momentum versus performance? How much is the carrent success attributable to fifty issues of momentum and how much to issue-to-issue performance? Interesting point. I don't think I'm going to sleep well tonight.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

CEREBUS - I say Cerebus #51 was the funniest think I read since Nixon's autobiography. the only - I say the only thing that disturbed me is that Elrod character. He's like - I say he's like a tattoo you know - he gets under your skin. But there's somethin' - I say there's somethin' about the boy I like.

Foghorn Leghorn

Mister Leghorn has asked that we not print his address as he has had a falling out with the IRS and would rather that they not know where he is until he can work out some kind of compromise -- reconciliation that is.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Hi Dave,

Congrats on the Koppy Awards. I also thought that the "High Society" series was quite good. You seem to have a rather unusual perspective on government. Have you considered running for office? I don't know that you would be any more honest than anyone else (This said with the knowledge that Lord Julius, Astoria, etc. were compiled by whatever you have in place of a "normal" human brain.) but you would probably present quite a break from the normal official image.

My thanks to you for sharing your perspective and your talent. I look forward to the arrival (#%&★!) distribution systems!) of issue 52.

Walter Keaswedy
817 Harrington Ave., #8
Norfold, VA., 23507

Actually it's my ambition to one day be the first person in Canadian history to run simultaneously on the Liberal, Conservative, NDP and Rhinoceros Party tickets. I don't care which side wins as long as I get my own seat in the Commons (preferably with a built-in drawing board).

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Sim-Type People,

How come no one noticed? I thought it was so obvious that everyone would write in and comment on it. Apparently not. So I decided that I would put keys to paper and write you once again. I am refering to the last panel of the Cerebus story in issue #46. Cerebus is seen counting his loot into 46 piles, but at the viewer's angle there is no resolution of detail so it looks like 46 piles of blank paper. 46 piles of blank paper = 46 issues = 46 piles of money. It seemed simple enough and quite beautiful in its simplicity. And speaking of Mr. The Isshurian, when will Cerebus be joining Captain Arnold and his Armpit Avengers? I can hardly wait to see your rendition of Hawkeye and She-Hulk.

Laurence W. Matishak
#203, 4912 - 54 Street,
Red Deer, Alberta
T4N 2G8

You people are starting to get me worried that all of my carefully hidden in-jokes are going to come to light some day and get me in an awful lot of trouble. Til then, at least Cerebus is becoming a shot in the arm for the magnifying glass industry.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Dave and Deni,

Being an avid ELFQUEST fan I trek to the local comic dealer frequently. I was there today and was looking around for anything of interest. In my earlier excursions there I had noticed a sign with a piggy like thing with a fat nose and glaring eyes announcing that...CEREBUS IS SOLD HERE!!...

I decided to give it a try (my tastes are very limited and for me this was a very daring move...). I'm in love (whoops!)...I just thought I'd let you know. I bought the earliest issue I could find: #24 (The Beguiling 2).. It took me a while to pick it all up, but it took me no time at all to get to know the fat-nosed glarye-eyed Cerebus (sorry...these comments are irresistable).

The dealer I usually go to for back issues of ELFQUEST only has #24 up to the most recent CEREBUS and I'd like any information you have to give on locating those issues before #24... uh, I noticed that...ahem...#1 was selling for $100...heh heh...I'm praying #2 is about 98 bucks less... I *love* your comic, but I think I'll wait a few (hundred) years before I increase my small pile of CEREBUS'.

Elizabeth Miles
1103 Russell Road,
Alexandria, Virginia 22301

I get the impression you haven't heard of SWORDS. Buying volume one, you could get the story from #1 and a small reproduction of the cover for ...5.00 devided by four, minus... carry the one... subtract 12 pages equals about 94 pages divided by...um...for a whole lot less than a hundred dollars!!!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dave will be at

ALTO CON

at

Northwoods Inn
Edmonton, Alberta
October 29-30, 1983

Also
Sergio Aragones
*
Mike Grell
*
Steve Leialoha